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ABSTRACT

Research on educational standards and school discipline shows that curriculum reform may also improve discipline by engaging students in a challenging environment. The widespread decline in high school standards seems to have come from diluting both the high school and college liberal arts curricula of the past, with students abandoning careers in technology development for those in technology application. With diversity among schools in their curricula, there has been a corresponding diversity of standards; school boards and state departments of education must specify standards that clarify public expectations of schools, provide guidelines for their use of resources, and develop accurate tests of school effectiveness. Diversity also affects the application of disciplinary guidelines in schools. Although research shows discipline being critical to student achievement, changing social standards have eroded the traditional authority structure in public schools. Rather than imposing more extrinsic controls on students to try to improve learning, however, schools can establish an orderly environment through academic challenges and self-discipline. Thus, to raise educational standards and improve discipline, curriculum improvement--including more demanding courses in elementary schools, specified competencies statewide, and an upgrading of textbooks--would challenge students and satisfy public demand for better educational quality. (JW)

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IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNING: THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS AND DISCIPLINE

by Michael B. Kane and Cheryl M. Chase

Working Paper No. TF-83-6

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INTRODUCTION

The Task Force on Education for Economic Growth made recommendations for improving the outcomes of schooling. These recommendations relate to teachers, teaching, administration, leadership, and increasing the range of financial and other resources available to schools. Other recommendations address elements of the process of schooling: attention to the curriculum, identifying the skills schools should impart and means of assessing mastery of these skills, and the role of standards, discipline, attendance, homework and grades in promoting effective schooling. All elements of the process of schooling contribute to the stable, orderly and demanding environment we know to be necessary for effective learning.

The Task Force is concerned that too little attention is being paid to these requirements for effective learning, particularly to standards and discipline. This paper will explore some of the reasons for this concern and, more important, present research evidence about how standards and discipline can reinforce one another and improve the learning environment. The goal is to suggest realistic and appropriate approaches. Unitary, unintegrated formulas such as establishing new rules for student behavior or requiring one-half hour of homework in each major subject each night will not by themselves magically increase learning. However, there is ample evidence that integrating standards of performance, discipline policy, attendance rules and homework requirements, coupled with a sincere belief that every student can learn when schools provide an appropriate environment for learning, can yield tremendous dividends.

Although the words "standards" and "discipline" have different meanings for different people, there is clear consensus among the general public that schools face problems in both areas. For the past 14 years, George Gallup has been polling public attitudes about schools. For the thirteenth time in those 14 years, "discipline" has been cited by the greatest number of respondents as the major problem facing the public schools. Over the same period, educators and the public have become increasingly concerned about declining SAT scores, lower levels of performance by students entering college and a serious lack of basic skills among high school graduates joining the labor force. All these factors have been taken to reflect a decline in "standards" in our educational system.

Certainly if we are certifying as "educated" a generation that is poorly prepared to read, write and compute, we are seriously affecting our ability as a nation to remain leaders of economic productivity. Evidence of the severity of the problem is far from conclusive. But there is irrefutable evidence that we are in some sense failing to develop the potential of large numbers of our young. Further, there is clear evidence that in schools and

communities that pay serious attention to "discipline" and "standards," more pupils achieve at higher levels and leave school more satisfied, more productive and more capable of contributing to both our nation's and their own growth.

This paper will draw on research evidence to describe the current status of standards and discipline and also to prescribe some ways to solve problems. It will conclude with a summary of what we know about successful solutions, propose criteria for evaluating possible improvement and suggest some resources for further review.

1. A RESEARCH REVIEW

Standards

Simply put, a standard is a commonly accepted measure or criterion. If we pull into a gas station and ask for a quart of oil, we expect to receive 32 liquid ounces of refined petroleum. When we buy a package of cereal, we compare weight, not volume, to measure how much we are receiving. The volume of the oil or the weight of the cereal are standards that can be applied in judging the value of the purchase. They are quantitative standards. If we look more closely at the oil can, we will see a rating by the American Petroleum Institute or other institution of how the product can reasonably be expected to perform. We look for and expect to find these qualitative standards -- these criteria -- across a variety of products.

When we talk of standards in education, we also are talking about measures and criteria. We are talking about the quantitative and qualitative meaning of levels of education experience. We expect a graduate M.D. to have had a certain amount of exposure to specific curricular areas (quantity), and we expect that exposure to have resulted in performance at certain levels of achievement (quality). We expect a third grader to have completed at least two years of elementary school and to have been exposed to specific reading, writing and computational tasks (quantity); we also expect a third grader to perform those tasks at certain specified levels (quality). Standards in education refer to the academic experience and level of performance required to earn course credits and degrees.

A concern that has been voiced widely over the past several years is that less academic experience and performance are now required than was previously the case. Sharing this perception are educators at the secondary and postsecondary level who assert that students are now less able to perform the work required of them, businessmen who find high school graduates less able to meet the demands of the workplace and members of the general public who feel that schools today demand too little of students. Certainly there is evidence to support these claims.

- Average performance on the College Board Scholastic Aptitude Test has declined. More important, the percent of students performing at higher levels has also declined.
- Students preparing for college education take fewer science, mathematics and foreign language courses than students took 15 years ago.
- Quantitative course requirements do not assure the quality of work, especially since the range of course offerings and course

content have broadened dramatically in many high schools over the past decade.

- While average scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test were declining, average grades among college-bound students were rising, which suggests that grades have become less reliable measures of quality.

This evidence is not new, and it has been widely cited as national commissions and task forces have reviewed the current state of education. It does indicate a decline in the standards of performance required for high school graduation and college entrance, and it is a reliable signal to which we must respond. The most productive response, however, must derive from an understanding of the context in which standards have declined. Aggregate levels of academic experience and performance of all potential students have received little attention, for example, even though they may be important to greater economic productivity as standards.

Despite the fact that average college-bound high school graduates in the United States do not perform at the level of average college-bound secondary school graduates in other nations, a large number of students in the United States are performing at very high levels. This is because we educate to higher levels more students in a given age group than most nations. For instance, only about 10% of all children in West Germany and 30% in France graduate from secondary school. This compares to about 75% in the United States. Obviously our high school graduates will not have the same average level of performance as West German graduates since our graduates are a more diverse group. However, when we compare the performance of the top 10% of our graduates with West German graduates (when, that is, we compare similar proportions of the relevant age group), our students outperform the West Germans and students in other nations (Husen, 1983). So although acting to reverse a decline in standards is important, we must be aware that we may also be producing a better-educated population than ever before as we continue to increase the percentage of students we retain at higher levels of education.

Research on the performance of minority students in the past decade offers further evidence of overall improvements in productivity. For example, numerous reports of the National Assessment of Educational Progress have cited rising levels of performance by black students in many different areas. Education achievement in the South has also been rising in recent years. Even while standards appear to be declining, achievement has been rising in various sectors of our population.

The research on standards and productivity is meager at best, somewhat unclear in meaning, and not directed at the joint issues of standards and productivity. But it does indicate that the relationship of declining standards to overall education

productivity is complex and that all the news about performance is not bad. One way to begin is by identifying just how standards have declined and what the relationship between standards and performance might be.

Historically, ties have been close between requirements for college admission and the high school curriculum. In the 19th century, college admission was open to students who fulfilled certain course requirements. Generally these students were male graduates of special preparatory schools that emphasized the classical subjects. With the emergence of the land grant colleges after 1862 and the nationally administered tests of the College Board in the early 20th century, students from a broader range of academic backgrounds were admitted to college. Generally, a specified number of courses in English, mathematics, science, language and history were required of graduates of accredited high schools. Accredited high schools were those that offered this range of courses and had the resources to provide appropriate instruction in them. Such high schools became widely available and publicly supported in this period. After World War II, college admission became even more universal. Anyone with either a high school diploma or a modest score on the General Education Development (GED) test could enter college.

Today, some colleges admit anyone over 18 years old. There are now more than 3,000 degree-granting institutions of higher education in the United States. Students with C averages are accepted at more than one-half of them. Better than B averages are required by only about 200 of them; the top 75 to 100 of these are extremely selective and look well beyond grades (Sjogren, 1983). This long-term history of open access to higher education in the United States complicates the notion of a decline in standards. Why should standards have declined at a time when access to some higher education was open to nearly anyone?

College admission requirements rose as education quality became a national priority in the post-Sputnik era. College admissions became increasingly selective, and high schools began offering advanced placement and other high quality courses. As the baby boom hit higher education in the mid-sixties, many institutions grew larger and many new ones opened. The selective schools remained stable in size, so less selective schools were able to become both larger and more selective. Selective admission practices continued to reinforce the importance of the classic college preparatory curriculum of English, mathematics, foreign language, science and history or social studies. As the baby boom was ending, our society turned its attention to a broad range of social issues and colleges enrolled a more diverse student body: more minorities, older students, poor students and foreign students. This new student body and others concerned about civil rights and the Vietnam war questioned many institutional requirements. Faculties responded with action.

The result was that during the 1970s many colleges made adjustments in the courses required for the baccalaureate, particularly in the areas of language, laboratory science and mathematics. High schools also began to diversify their programs. The notion of a classic curriculum changed rapidly in both content and quality. By the late seventies, when the decline in enrollments posed financial problems for colleges, the change in required curricula (quantitative standards, if you will) was accompanied by lowered admission standards (qualitative standards) at institutions that had previously become moderately selective. The result is that average college students today have less rigorous training in basic academic subjects (Austin, 1983).

College students today also have a poorer academic self-concept and express a greater need for remedial work. The rate of college attendance is declining, especially among white males. There is less interest in graduate study, especially among males. Fields such as mathematics, the humanities and social science show enrollment drops. Fields such as business, engineering and computer science show enrollment increases despite decreased interest in science and mathematics. This bodes poorly for our ability to maintain high quality liberal arts programs and to continue the basic research that undergirds new technological developments. Students today are more concerned about power and status than about social issues and social problems (Austin, 1983). This is reflected in their pursuit of careers in the application of technology rather than in its development, which may be the biggest danger of all.

Essentially, then, the widespread decline in standards seems to result from abandoning and diluting the classic high school curriculum and the university's liberal arts curriculum. This has been accompanied by performance and attitudes that threaten our nation's ability to perform in an increasingly technological age.

This is not the first time in our national history that diversified high school curricula have brought cries of declining standards. In 1893 the Committee of Ten of the National Education Association published a major report on the goals of the secondary school program that deplored the lack of standards in high schools. Some schools offered courses in 40 or more subjects; there was no agreement about what should be taught or how it should be taught, which made the meaning of the high school diploma uncertain. Similar charges were heard in the late 1950s. Today some high schools offer up to 40 courses in single areas of study; it is not uncommon to find 30 to 40 English or social studies courses available in large comprehensive high schools (Cusick, 1983).

The concept of standard implies some commonality or uniformity, but finding uniformity in diversity is not easy. It is particularly difficult to assign a uniform meaning to a high

school diploma when the work required for that diploma varies within and across programs and schools. The issue facing us is not simply declining standards but also the lack of a single standard.

It appears that when we move away from uniformity, from some common meaning in quantitative standards for education, quality suffers. We do not have a national curriculum in this country. Contrary to common belief, we do not even have rigid state curricula standards. Universities set only laissez-faire quantitative requirements of so many courses in each basic curricular area. Nevertheless, except when education opportunity has expanded (as it did with the growth of the land grant colleges, after World War II and during the 1970s), we have had a fairly uniform conception nationally of what constitutes an appropriate college preparatory curriculum. When that conception is no longer uniform, we hear cries of declining standards like those heard in 1893, in 1957 and today.

The lack of a core curriculum in secondary schools means there is no meaningful quantitative standard for the diploma and there are no qualitative standards. Courses are so diverse that meaningful measurements of quality are impossible. The result is a dimunition of academic rigor. And with diminished rigor comes diminished performance. Research attests that hard work begets high achievement. When the demand for hard work is absent, particularly at age levels where academic self-direction has not yet been learned, achievement falls (Pace, 1983).

The challenge facing the nation and its 16,000 independent school districts is to determine the goals of education and then to determine what curricula best achieve those goals. This will be exceedingly difficult, but we must begin. States and localities must set standards for quantity and quality. Colleges and universities must be more specific in their requirements for admission and graduation. Despite local differences, we are a single nation. As we try to determine education goals and curricula locally, more similarities than differences will emerge. The best teachers and the best-equipped schools will not necessarily produce students proficient in mathematics and science unless school boards or state departments of education specify standards that (1) clarify the expectations we have for the education of our children, (2) provide broad guidelines for the use of resources we have at our disposal and (3) test the effectiveness of the schools in meeting those expectations and using those resources. This is the message of the initial report of the Task Force on Education for Economic Growth. It is well supported by a review of the history of American education. It is not a cry for a return to the basics. Times are changing, and we must evaluate our curricula in light of changing needs; the basics were never constant.

Discipline

There is a problem with discipline if only because people believe there is. But discipline is a word, like standards, that has different meanings for different people, which makes it hard to determine the extent of the problem. Recent studies of serious behavior problems in school such as vandalism and assault show them to be less widespread than commonly thought and decreasing in magnitude in the late seventies. But in consistently naming discipline as the number-one problem facing the public schools, respondents to public opinion polls doubtless have less serious offenses in mind. In 1982 only 27% answered an open-ended question by saying that discipline was the most serious problem facing their schools. But 70% viewed discipline as a very serious or fairly serious problem when they were asked about discipline specifically (Gallup, 1982, p. 44).

But what does "discipline" mean? Discipline to most people means obeying rules and regulations (54%), authority or control by teachers (31%) or respect for teachers (18%). Only a small percentage (5%) cite fighting, violence, smoking or drugs. Interestingly, these statistics hold fairly constant across respondents with children in school and without children in school (Gallup, 1982, p. 45). School administrators, however, tend to be more concerned with visible abuses such as vandalism, absenteeism and fighting (Kaeser, 1979, p. 12).

Data from studies of schools and schooling reinforce the role of discipline in an effective learning environment. In his study of Public and Private Schools, James Coleman notes that private schools produce better academic outcomes than public schools and also provide a "safer, more disciplined, and more ordered environment" (1981, p. 163). Coleman goes on to say:

> This suggests that achievement increases as the demands, both academic and disciplinary, are greater. The suggestion is confirmed by two comparisons: Among the public schools, those that have academic demands and disciplinary standards at the same level as the average private school have achievement at the level of that in the private sector (all comparisons, of course involving students from comparable backgrounds). And among the private schools, those with academic demands and disciplinary standards at the level of the average public school showed achievement levels similar to those of the average public school.
>
> The evidence from these data -- and from other recent studies -- is that stronger academic demands and disciplinary standards produce better achievement [emphasis in original] (Coleman, 1981, p. 10).

A study of 140 Chicago schools over the 1970s identified distinguishing characteristics of "good" schools. One of the seven characteristics was pupil discipline. "Supervisors in good schools believed that classroom discipline is essential to learning" (Wynn, 1981, p. 380). The study also found that "private and church related schools tended to have better discipline procedures, but by no means all of the public schools were inadequate" (Wynn, 1981, p. 380).

If discipline is critical to achievement, why do we not have more of it? In some respects the answer depends on standards. Social change over the past 15 years has eroded the traditional authority structure of the public schools. The principle of in loco parentis used to apply through the college years. Presently, colleges and parents have each relinquished authority over children's behavior. Even though most parents expect the principle to apply in high school, enough students and parents challenged that assumption that the courts expanded the civil rights of students and limited the capacity of high schools to act in loco parentis. The consensus that once existed on the school's authority has disappeared. This combined with the generally increasing size and bureaucratization of high schools "gives public schools less power and authority to exercise the responsibility for and authority over students that is necessary to the school's functioning. The result is a breakdown of discipline in the public schools" (Coleman, 1981, p. 162).

Although the courts have limited the authority of schools, there are many schools where discipline remains good. The alternative has been to teach self-discipline, to create expectations for positive behavior by students, to provide learning experiences that offer opportunities for success and the development of positive self-concepts and to improve curriculum and standards so that schools are exciting places for students. Effective discipline in effective schools comes primarily from the intrinsic value of the learning experience, not from extrinsic controls.

In an excellent paper entitled "Discipline: The Great False Hope," Raymond Wlodkowski offers a compelling argument for basing discipline on principles of learning. He notes that "in most schools the most widely accepted and practiced interpretation of the word discipline is control -- student acceptance of or submission to teacher authority. Obedience" (Wlodkowski, 1981, p. 2). Wlodkowski goes on to offer a research-based alternative to this authoritarian model.

> There is no doubt that student acceptance of teacher authority is necessary for a school to function. However, the range of student acceptance and the imposition of teacher authority varies dynamically according to the demands of the situation at hand and the goals of the teacher in charge.

. . . The problem with discipline, as a word, is that it does not make these distinctions. Furthermore, because it so often in practice is equated with control it blurs and diffuses our attention away from what we can do to help students to <u>want</u> to learn and increases our focus on what we can do to <u>make</u> them learn.

. . . If the criteria of 1) improved student achievement; 2) improved student attitude toward school; and 3) improved teacher attitude toward students are applied (and it seems they must be), there is no research which shows that better discipline, by any definition, as a singular approach has made even one school in this country more effective. Astonishing? No, both logically and empirically, discipline alone is not enough to make a school a better teaching and learning environment.

. . . Like punishment, discipline applied as control can cause more difficulties than it remedies. There is evidence that a continual emphasis on discipline with a constant surveillance by the teacher for disciplinary infractions may produce more problems than it solves.

. . . Beyond the reality that discipline is an ambiguous concept that most often translates into teacher control of students, discipline alone does not work because it is deficient as a process to accomplish what schools really have to be about.

Like a conductor who doesn't care how the music sounds so long as the orchestra sits up straight and starts and stops together, discipline alone seems limited and vacuous. Discipline does not make a better curriculum. Discipline does not mean effective instruction. Discipline does not motivate students. Discipline has to be part of and inseparable from something larger and more important than itself. Learning. Integrally combined with effective teaching, sound curriculum, and competent administrative leadership, it is a force for learning. Alone and as a primary focus for a teacher or a school, it may actually be a force against learning.

. . . By clearly connecting learning to discipline for students, the teacher demonstrates that the goal sought has required behavior. This helps students to understand that what they need and want is directly related to how they act. This understanding is essential for effective discipline and student <u>self-control</u>. When practiced as such, students are no longer cast into a position of submissive obedience. Instead, they can see themselves as acting responsibly

> toward desired goals with consequent feelings of positive self-esteem. With this approach, the emphasis is on learning and teaching with discipline playing an important but subordinate role (Wlodkowski, 1981, p. 5-8).

The goal is to establish an orderly environment that supports learning. Order becomes the key word, and order comes through challenge and self-discipline rather than through control. Research demonstrates that a strong emphasis on discipline as control can lead to hostility and aggressiveness, that inconsistent application of rules maintains behavior rather than changes it and that disciplinary attention is frequently disruptive to the learning process -- and is also the kind of attention the disruptive child wants.

The research on discipline must be viewed as Wlodkowski views it, in an integrated manner. Discipline is not an aspect of learning that can be dealt with on its own. As he concludes:

> Discipline, by its own name or any other title, lacks any wide based research support as an effective process for the improvement of student learning as well as behavior. When discipline is referred to as discipline, and considered helpful in the improvement of any school, it is clearly part of a much bigger picture. At best it is a strong current in a much larger stream of effective administrative leadership, competent teachers, sound curriculum and instruction, and supportive parental involvement" (Wlodkowski, 1981, p. 11).

Other reviewers agree. When Cotton and Savard of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory reviewed 26 research documents on student discipline and motivation, they found that:

> Variables studied in the 26 documents included time-on-task, achievement, disruptions, student attitudes and self-concept, absenteeism, disciplinary referral, detention, suspension, and expulsion. Among the review's findings were that effective classroom management involved a high degree of structure, clear and consistently enforced rules, and teacher monitoring and feedback; that behavioral and motivational improvement secured through material rewards is not as permanent as that achieved by social means; that student academic success will improve motivation and discipline; and that effective punishment should be commensurate with the offense and accompanied by support and assistance" (Resources in Education, 1982, ED 224-170).

Support and assistance must not be taken lightly. Wynn's study also found that in "good" schools:

- Staff members shared firm concepts about prohibitions.
- Consistency was important in rule enforcement.
- The larger the school, the more elaborate the rules. But in larger good schools, the rules were both elaborate and clear.
- Penalties were consistent, incremental, simple and expeditiously applied. Students saw them as unpleasant.
- All staff members enforced the rules equally and saw enforcement as a professional responsibility.
- Supervisors supported staff enforcement efforts. This was made easier in close judgment situations by the fact that first-level penalties were relatively minor. By the time serious penalties were applied, students had a long record of violations or were clearly guilty of a serious offense.

This paper is not saying that discipline has no place in schools but that it should be an integral part of the learning environment and its relationship to other aspects of the learning process should be recognized.

2. APPROACHES TO IMPROVEMENT

In this section we identify points at which action can be taken to raise education standards and improve discipline in the schools. Where possible, previous experience with these approaches will be discussed. Where research is adequate, some guidelines for deciding among alternatives will be presented.

Standards

What students are taught is a primary determinant of what they learn. It is not surprising that the curriculum has been considered a main contributor to the problem of lower education standards. Reduced course requirements and diluted content each present possibilities for action. Tests that measure what is learned and hold schools and students accountable for that learning offer further possibilities for raising standards.

The suggestions for action that follow are not prescriptions. Our intent is to identify some areas in which action is appropriate, recognizing that unique features of each state and locality influence its education needs and choices. What is not unique is the need for high standards. We also recognize that the present situation is highly dynamic. As of September 1983, 41 states reported activity to reform requirements, 42 to enrich or reform the curriculum and 20 to reform student testing (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). State action has begun. It will continue, and complementary local action is likely.

Course Requirements

Enrollments and requirements in mathematics, science and foreign language have dropped precipitously during the past two decades; course offerings in English and social studies have expanded. The result is that students have great freedom of choice in satisfying what in most states have become modest requirements for school graduation and college admission.

Perhaps the most straightforward and speedy way to raise education standards is to require all schools to teach all students a broader range of subjects at higher levels of difficulty across more years of schooling. Constitutionally, states have the power to increase educational course requirements and, from the evidence cited above, it appears many states are using that power. However, there is other evidence that simply raising requirements is insufficient. For example, "across the nation 53% of school districts have raised the number of required courses in English, mathematics, science, social studies or foreign language during the past three years, a recent survey . . . shows. But the study

. . . found no consistent relationship between course requirements and student achievement in the districts surveyed" (Washington Post, 1983). Unless requirements specify what is to be taught and at what level of difficulty, and unless achievement is required and tested, higher standards are not guaranteed. Unless courses at the elementary level become more demanding, high performance by large numbers of high school students is unlikely.

Course Content

Local control of education has seriously affected and in some respects paralyzed curriculum reform. One result has been anarchy in high school course offerings. But another result has been a virtual national curriculum at the elementary level and in some basic high school courses, since (1) very few texts exist in any given subject area across a grade level, (2) the variation across these few texts is very minor and (3) almost all of what is taught in most classrooms is based on textbooks. Reviews of the "national curriculum" indicate a dilution of difficulty across most subject areas over the past decade. Once again we find falling qualitative standards associated with falling quantitative standards.

The existence of this virtual national curriculum offers opportunity for rapid upgrading of curriculum standards. Textbook publishers are highly responsive to a few major markets -- larger urban school districts and textbook adoption committees in key states. Demands for higher-level textbooks from these groups would have far-reaching consequences. It is ironic that, while 42 states are considering curriculum reform, textbook practices go unreported, even though these practices offer a powerful tool for curriculum reform and higher standards.

Other possibilities for curriculum reform are discussed in the paper referenced at the end of this section.

Discipline

Experience with education standards suggests that the place to begin raising standards is with a review of the curriculum. Experience with improving discipline points in similar directions. Study after study shows that schools where discipline is effective are challenging, engaging places for children to be, staffed by effective teachers and led by dedicated, sensitive administrators. Simply put, discipline cannot be separated from the educational process. According to one study of more than 500 schools that are reported to have effective discipline practices:

> Discipline is learned and can be taught -- indeed must be taught. One principle goal of education is to teach discipline, which is the most basic of all "basics";

> none surpasses it. The challenge for educators and all adults, then, is to help children develop the skills of responsible behavior by creating an environment in which children may acquire those skills. Viewing discipline as separate from education has often led us toward repressive measures to reestablish order rather than to provide positive educational approaches to discipline educators know will work (Wayson et al., 1982, p. 1).

A study of effective schools by the Citizens Council for Ohio Schools notes that:

> Discipline was not an annoying distraction from education, but a crucial part of teaching. Teaching alternative behavior was seen as the aim of discipline in the schools rather than simply punishing bad behavior (Kaeser, 1979, p. 3).

The Citizens Council concluded about Ohio schools, "school attendance and discipline problems can be solved . . . no new special program needs to be launched" (Kaeser, 1979, p. 4). Since good discipline evolves not from isolated activities but from total educational practice, specific projects will not be identified. Listed instead are some of the elements associated with disciplined schools and some further resources. These resources include outcomes of national surveys, reviews of schools with effective approaches to discipline and descriptions of school district programs.

The Wynn study of good schools underscores the importance of staff consensus and involvement in the enforcement of rules. However, staff also must follow good discipline-related practices in delivering instruction to pupils: "classroom organization and management as part of instruction are key processes in establishing and maintaining an effective learning environment" (Wlodkowski, 1981, p. 10).

Research on orderly learning environments suggests that:

1. Classroom organization and management skills are intimately related to instruction skills. Effective teachers tend to be good managers.

2. Students like teachers whom they perceive as good at managing the class (getting students settled, working and behaving) as well as good at teaching (making the subject clear and interesting).

3. Effective teachers view order as part of the instructional process.

4. Effective teachers deal with misbehavior by focusing on the task rather than on the person: "Nathan, if you don't listen,

you won't understand the assignment," not "Nathan, you're acting bad again."

5. Effective teachers are prepared to teach. They know what they are doing and what they will be doing next.

6. Effective teachers keep students actively engaged in productive activities; transitions from one activity to the next are smooth.

7. Effective teachers tend to be aware of what is going on in all parts of the classroom.

8. Effective teachers tend to spot disruptive behavior early, deal with it firmly, and keep interference with the lesson to a minimum.

9. Any disciplinary style that involves very frequent interventions is likely to be counterproductive. (Wlodkowski, 1981, pp. 10-11)

The final set of characteristics offered here are from the Phi Delta Kappan survey of 500 schools where discipline is reputed to be good. If a proposal does not seem to fit the framework suggested by these 12 characteristics, it is best abandoned and a more integrated approach developed.

1. The schools did not necessarily build programs around unusual or innovative practices, but instead seemed to combine well-known activities with a clear understanding of how the activities contributed to the total educational environment.

2. The schools did not adopt isolated practices to deal with discipline problems but instead created an overall environment conducive to good discipline.

3. Most staff viewed their schools as a place where staff and students come to work and to do something well.

4. The schools are student-oriented.

5. The schools focused on causes of discipline problems rather than on symptoms.

6. Programs in the schools emphasized positive behavior and used preventive measures rather than punitive actions to improve discipline.

7. The schools adopted practices to meet their own needs and reflect their own styles of operation.

8. The principal plays a key role in making these schools what they are.

9. Staff believe in their schools and their students; they expend unusual amounts of energy to make their beliefs come true.

10. Teachers in the schools handle all or most routine discipline problems themselves.

11. Most of the schools have stronger-than-average ties with parents and community agencies.

12. The schools were open to review and evaluation by a wide variety of school and community sources. (Wayson et al., 1982, pp. 10-27)

Tests

Our symbols of education competence have lost their meaning. They no longer represent the education achievement of students hired or admitted for further study. They have lost meaning because they no longer reflect exposure to certain subjects and the attainment of certain levels of quality.

One fairly immediate but radical remedy would be to supplement our present system of diplomas and degrees with a system of examinations. Examinations that assess the extent to which a particular curriculum has been mastered are not new to American education; they exist today in the form of New York State Regents' examinations and the College Board advanced placement examinations. Although only a few of our students presently take such examinations, almost all students in Europe take national examinations. While proposals for national examinations would meet almost certain death in our environment of strong local control, it is possible to conduct state examinations, as New York does, or even regional examinations, as New England does. Giving students a choice of examinations would leave a national curriculum unprescribed.

The testing program we presently have throughout the nation is one of the most extensive in the world. However, since it is structured carefully to be unrelated to what is taught in particular schools, it offers no opportunity to raise standards. Similarly, the minimum competency examinations recently introduced in more than two-thirds of the states do not raise standards and may, in fact, lower them. Nevertheless, these examinations could improve standards if they could be used to assess more than minimum competence.

Summary

Improving standards requires significant effort at all levels of education. Colleges must raise the requirements for admission and the requirements for degrees. States and school districts must require courses in a broader range of subjects; they must also raise qualitative standards of course content. We must also make sure that students meet requirements.

Among the activities that are suitable for consideration are:

1. Revising the curriculum
2. Reviewing textbook adoption policies
3. Developing appropriately different curricula for different groups of students or, conversely, making the curriculum better and more unified for all students
4. Initiating advanced placement courses in high schools
5. Gearing examinations to specific curricula

Most important is the integration of these and other efforts. In an improvement effort at any level, the issues of quantity, quality and assessment must all be considered.

3. FURTHER RESOURCES

Despite the widespread concern over standards, little has been written on the topic. One paper that interested readers may find helpful is "Standards, Curriculum and Performance: A Historical and Comparative Perspective" by Lauren and Daniel Resnick, a report to the National Commission on Excellence in Education that is available in paperback from the Educational Document Reproduction Service, P.O. Box 190, Arlington, Virginia 22210, 703-841-1212. It can be also read on microfiche at locations that maintain a current collection of documents distributed by the Educational Resources Information Center. Additional sources of related information are cited in the references to this paper.

The resources available for improving discipline are somewhat more extensive, as the following list suggests. Where possible, the ERIC document number is provided, information on the location of ERIC documents is available from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (703-841-1212).

1. Orderly Schools That Serve All Children: A Review of Successful Schools in Ohio, a report of the Citizens Council for Ohio Schools (July 1979). ERIC no. ED 181015. Cited above.

2. Directory of Schools Reported to Have Exemplary Discipline and Handbook for Developing Schools With Good Discipline. Phi Delta Kappan (Bloomington, Indiana, 1982). ERIC no. ED 215439 and ED 215440. Cited above.

3. Everybody's Business: A Book About School Discipline. American Friends Service Committee (Columbia, South Carolina, Southeastern Public Education Program, n.d.). ERIC no. 206062. Based on the idea that self-discipline is preferable to imposed discipline, this book provides programmatic guidelines and reviews the experience of Richland School District #1, Columbia, South Carolina.

4. Manual for Improving Student Discipline. Longfield Institute (Milford, Delaware, 1979). ERIC no. ED 191130. This manual provides presents a process for developing a student discipline program (public expectations, legal requirements and implementation procedures). It reviews implementation by one district and includes copies of policies and operational forms.

5. Resource Handbook on Discipline Codes. National School Resource Network (Washington, D.C., 1980). ERIC no. ED 199885. This handbook on the preparation of school discipline codes, covers the issues typically addressed, commentary from recent research and applicable laws. Sample school codes are included.

6. School Discipline: Preventing Problems. School Management Handbook, Number I. National Association of Elementary School Principals (1981). ERIC no. ED 222987. Developed for the elementary school administrator, this document briefly reviews such topics as concepts central to effective school discipline; preventing misbehavior; roles of principals, students, teachers and parents; place of codes and handbooks; in-school suspension; and student constitutional rights.

7. The Anatomy of a Program of Humane Discipline in the Atlanta Public School System. Atlanta Public Schools, Atlanta Teacher Corps Consortium (Atlanta, Georgia, 1979). ERIC no. ED 182015. This document on the implementation of a districtwide policy includes questionnaires on staff and school climate, a district operations manual, an administrator and teacher manual and letters to parents. Procedures for in-school suspension and detention are also included.

8. Strategies for Implementing a District-Wide Discipline Improvement Program (1980). ERIC no. ED 184239. This 25-page paper reviews efforts of the Springfield, Illinois, school district to improve school discipline. It emphasizes a large-scale approach and the importance of leadership.

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